

DISCUSSION

I

**TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY MEETS
 TRANSCENDENTAL GRAMMAR**

In his article "Does Transcendental Subjectivity Meet Transcendental Grammar?" in this journal (July, 1993), Dr. Kanthamani has commented on my paper "Wittgenstein and the Availability of a Transcendental Critique" published in this journal (July, 1992). He has argued that in Wittgenstein's later philosophy a transcendental critique in Kant's sense is not available. He has also suggested that any effort to read Wittgenstein's early transcendental philosophy into his later philosophy will be "only a search for an anonymous Wittgenstein" (p. 320). In this short rejoinder I would like to clarify my position and, if possible, eliminate certain misconceptions about the idea of transcendental critique.

Kanthamani's main arguments can be summarized as follows :

- (a) The idea of a critique of reason is different from that of the critique of language, and both are altogether different from the idea of a critique of philosophy (ideology).
- (b) The critique of language need not be a transcendental critique, let alone need it take a transcendental turn.
- (c) The notion of transcendental turn is just a convenient ploy to ignore the basically linguistic character of Wittgenstein's notion of philosophical grammar.

I would comment on each of the points mentioned here.

I agree with Kanthamani on the point that the Kantian critique of reason is not exactly the same as Wittgenstein's critique of language. The obvious difference between the two critiques is that whereas Kant plots the structure and limits of the reason under the wider programme of defending the rationalist discourse, Wittgenstein is undertaking a plotting of the structure and limits of the natural (ordinary) language with the aim of dislodging the Cartesian-Kantian Egocentric 'logos'. Wittgenstein is redefining the 'logos' by situating it in the 'human world' disclosed in the natural language of man. Yet, he finds a methodological clue in Kant's critical enquiry into the 'limits' of the 'logos'. The limits have to be placed before the critical understanding. Therefore, philosophy cannot abdicate the responsibility of standing apart from language and seeing it as it were from a transcendental point of view.

Wittgenstein's critique is not at the service of science, since he, unlike Kant, does not aim at transcendental science of synthetic *a priori* laws of Nature. He aims at dissolving the *a priori* science altogether. Wittgenstein's notion of grammar is not the counterpart of an *a priori* linguistic science. Grammar and its rules, though *a priori* and transcendental, represent merely the "scaffolding" of language and the world. They express the "essence" of language and the world. So, it is appropriate to say that Wittgenstein's notion of grammar is "phenomenological" in Husserl's sense rather than "scientific". Kanthamani has been under the impression that I have imposed the idea of an *a priori* linguistics on Wittgenstein's notion of philosophical grammar. I have, in fact, argued for just the opposite. For me, philosophical grammar is not merely "anti-scientific", but also trans-scientific. It is transcendental in its basic approach.

The idea of transcendental turn is inevitable, if Wittgenstein's critique of language has to be properly understood. The critique is so designed that it presents a "perspicuous" view of language and the world. It cannot, however, present a perspicuous grammar without transcending the constraints of the naturalistic world-view. It has to cancel the "naturalistic" urge to transgress the limits of language. So, philosophy has to come back to the "roots" of language, i.e., "proto-phenomena" which can provide an essentially trans-empirical view of language and the world. I have, therefore,

argued that it is the transcendental viewpoint which alone can be the right approach underlying Wittgenstein's critique of language. Kanthamani has not quite appreciated the fact that the transcendental turn is not a mere manoeuvre to be "non-scientific" but to be essentially a trans-scientific understanding of language.

The transcendental turn is also not a turn towards a mythology of rules or *a priori* normativism as Kanthamani supposes. The rule-mythology is precisely the creation of *a priori* linguistics. Wittgenstein's critique is destructive of this mythology. The so-called *a priori* normativism is also the shadow of the *a priori* grammar of rules. Wittgenstein's aim is not to substitute a normative grammar for his transcendental grammar. So, it is not right to say that transcendental grammar ultimately culminates in a "transcendental linguistics of normativity" (p. 321).

What is here taken to be the philosophical account of language is not committed to the availability of synthetic *a priori* laws of grammar. Kanthamani rightly surmises that I have shown no inclination to prove that such laws are available. All that I leave open is the possibility of necessary rules of grammar which have often been characterized by Wittgenstein as "arbitrary". I am not worried about the exact interpretation of the word 'arbitrary'. It only means, according to one view at least, the unconstrained character of rules themselves. Rules are simply there where they belong, that is, in the language-games. That is to say, they are autonomous. So, where is the necessity of imposing them on language-games?

Kanthamani has further said that I have conflated the critique of language with the critique of philosophy or ideology itself. This, he believes, cannot be done because philosophy cannot be a critique of language and of itself simultaneously. If philosophy is a critique of itself, it reduces itself to non-existence, that is, denies itself and so it is contradictory to suppose that it is a critique of language, at the same time. But this contradiction is an illusion. My supposition is that philosophy is a critique of itself only by being a critique of language. Only by understanding the elimination of the "bewitchment" of human intelligence by language can philosophy destroy the so-called philosophical "houses of cards". Philosophy

evolves a self-critique not by accident but by necessity. Wittgenstein has amply demonstrated that the critical activity of philosophy cannot be compartmentalized. That is to say, philosophy is a single critique, not only of language and thought but also of itself.

I do not, however, have to work with three 'options', i.e., science, philosophy and transcendental enterprise as Kanthamani asserts (p. 320). Transcendental enterprise is not anti-philosophical; it is of course anti-scientific. As I have already argued, philosophy itself is a transcendental enquiry. So, it is the nature of philosophy not to construct theories, or 'hypotheses' like science. Philosophy only "describes" what is already there. Philosophy, therefore, has no other option than to become transcendental; otherwise, it succumbs to the risk of collapsing into science. Either philosophy adopts the standpoint of transcendental grammar or it ceases to exist. I have argued that philosophy is a transcendental grammar and so the other alternative is ruled out. There is, therefore, no implication that Wittgenstein's later method of philosophy is not philosophical at all according to the transcendental account. Rather, it is the responsibility of those who do not accept the transcendental account to show how they can account for philosophy in the latter Wittgenstein.

It is now obvious that the transcendental account is not a mere search for an anti-scientific standpoint. It is not based on an ill-informed and naive account of science either.

It is a decisive step in the serious pursuit of understanding language and the world as they are "given". It is, therefore, imperative to recognize the autonomy of the philosophical activity. This autonomy is better preserved in the uniqueness of philosophy being transcendental. Philosophy in a way must guard against the false paradigms set by science and mathematics.

The theme that transcendental subjectivity meets transcendental grammar is the constant refrain of Wittgenstein's transcendental philosophy. To allow a gap between them is to go back to the Ego-centric framework of Descartes and Kant. Wittgenstein has abolished the Ego without dissolving the transcendental subjectivity which is built into the transcendental grammar. Without the transcendental subjectivity, grammar itself would lose its transcendental character,

and so there would be no standpoint from which grammar can be studied. In that case philosophy itself will be impossible.

It is this theme that is common between Wittgenstein's early and later philosophy. The later philosophy retains the transcendental framework precisely to understand grammar, i. e. to situate language and meaning in their proper perspective. It is surprising that the continuity thesis has been underestimated by Kanthamani. I suppose that continuity appears not only in the middle period but also in the later period. The continuity lies in the basic framework that lends unity and coherence to Wittgenstein's later philosophy. This may appear to be a kind of conservatism. But the fact remains that no philosopher, however revolutionary, can afford to shake off his own native mental makeup, i.e., his own genius. Wittgenstein is no exception. There may be early Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein of the 'middle' period and 'later' Wittgenstein, but there are not three Wittgensteins. I am, therefore, all the time searching for the 'real' Wittgenstein, not the 'anonymous' Wittgenstein.

Kanthamani's comments, nonetheless, are philosophically insightful and deserve serious attention. My response is precisely to make my position clearer.

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Discussion of the point under consideration through the medium of this journal is closed herewith.

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